000 with the greatly-extended air services which had developed since those early days.

The radio officer came and reported that he had received the 'all clear' from the flying-boat. We locked up the rest-house, dismissed the serangs, and crowded into the two station wagons which were to take us the ten miles to the Fort. It was a tight squeeze, with bearers and clerks sitting on each others' knees in the back seat, but since transport is scarce in the desert, I found this was the customary way of travelling.

487 There was a track of sorts,* beaten out by the wheels of countless vehicles, which wound its way around the sand dunes and the date palms. In hot weather the desert is as hard as a macadam road, and one can drive almost anywhere, but in the season of the rains flooding is frequent, and once you get stuck in a soft patch nothing less than a four-wheel drive truck with a crane will get you out.

133 So we stuck to the road and did a fairly comfortable thirty miles an hour through the most monotonous country I have ever seen. Fortunately the rest of the desert is not like this. Between Sharjah and Dubai the landscape is as flat as a table, and the sand a dun, muddy grey, without a single bit of scrub or camel grass to relieve it.

494 There was little activity on the road. A flock of black goats scattered as we drove past, the young herdsman casting us a scared glance. A fat merchant on a donkey, his bare legs almost touching the ground, trotted by, a dignified expression on his face which contrasted comically with his primitive mode of travel. Away to the dunes on our left, a train of loaded camels trudged majestically towards a Bedouin encampment, their riders carrying long, silver-chased rifles. Ahead there gleamed in the sun what looked like a wide, shallow lake. Our driver made straight towards it; as we advanced so it receded, and eventually it evaporated into the air.

● [823] I have often heard it said that these mirages are due to heat reflection, but an old Arab whom I knew said they were caused by the salt crystals and silicates in the sand, which reflected the sun like a mirror. Science may not accept his theory, but I have often picked up large flakes of salt from the desert which sparkled like fragments of glass.

361 712 We approached the village of Khan, a small dependancy of Sharjah, whose minarets and white-walled houses appeared to float in the air like a fairy city—again the effect of a mirage. Five more miles and we skirted a high range of sand dunes and soon glimpsed the radio masts and white, crenellated walls of our fortress home. A mile behind it the dun stone walls of the sheikh's palace

*[Between Dubai and Sharjah, ca 10 miles apart -- Analyst]